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There is a serious issue facing the state of media and the future of media in the United States today. It is an issue that cannot be solved by commercial media systems and it is an issue that cannot be solved simply through the existence of the internet. Communities are not represented by the media that serve them – not accurately, not in the issues in which they cover, and not in a way that can hope to avoid the bias and censorship inherent in a commercial media system. In addition, our commercial media systems cannot thrive and foster competition until the United States and the FCC adopts standards that keep quite strong the solution that must be adopted for a strong media of tomorrow. That solution is community media. Unfortunately, this community media system is being destroyed even at a time when it is most needed.

A community media system must be:

1. Independently controlled by a local nonprofit organization dedicated solely to this purpose. No commercial entity should be involved in governance, nor should the government. Monies for these centers should never become part of local government budgets.
2. Include support from all television provider revenue, all internet provider revenue, and all voice provider revenue generated using public space. Update the PEG model to include services for what are now considered data and voice, but which are all part of the same thing – data and information transmission.
3. Prioritize public access as the mission of this organization. The community needs a voice. The community needs representation in defining its voice. It needs access to tools, education, and support to utilize all modern technology in meeting these needs.
4. Community media centers require adequate funding to operate – 5% of all revenues in all data services, and approximately \$5 per household per year.
5. These bare minimum essentials to a media that serves its local community, while maintaining local identity, while being accessible to all, should be minimum standards everywhere in the United States. By adopting such standards, a level playing field will be established for all commercial media so that competition will be encouraged. All prospective commercial entities will be required to meet these standards, across all data delivery models. There is no more level playing field than that.

The United States currently stands at the brink of defining what kinds of values it will place on the media system of tomorrow. Such a system must involve community media that has strong regular fiscal support generated through use of public space. This support must include revenues from all types of data transmission, and likewise, such community media centers must provide tools, training, and staff support not only in radio or television, but in the development of web sites, blogs, and whatever the future may hold. This is the only system that will preserve the human value of a locally controlled, fair, independently managed system that is accessible for all.

Sincerely,

Peter Albert Williams